HEALTHY CITY THRIVING FAMILIES

A Quarterly Update from the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support

October - December 2003

New Families Center: Safety Net for Minneapolis Families

A 9-year old Minneapolis girl is able to open her eyes and see again, thanks in part to the assistance she received at the New Families Center (NFC).

Cathy Luiken, outreach worker at the NFC recalls her 9-year old client, diagnosed with a rare disease that prevented her from opening her eyes. "After being denied Medical Assistance coverage three times, her parents came to New Families Center, because they didn't think they would be able to pay for the surgery she needed," explains Luiken. "We (NFC staff) worked with Children's Hospital, who agreed to perform the girl's surgery free of charge." Luiken also helped the family get a hearing with the State Medical Review Team, and is confident they will finally qualify for Medical Assistance due to their medical bills.

Located in a school near the Chicago/Franklin intersection in south Minneapolis, the NFC has a steady stream of visitors the week before school starts. There are strollers with young children, babies, school-age children, teens, and many parents in the hallway that are seeking assistance. One concerned mother is inquiring about eyeglasses for her child, given several resources to try, and told that if none of these strategies work, there is a possible fallback. Spanish conversations are heard all around, with English and a few other languages mixed in as well.

Navigating the medical system can be especially difficult for limited-English speaking residents, who are mostly low-income. The NFC - a unique partnership between the

Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support, Minneapolis Public Schools, Children's Defense Fund – Minnesota and the Healthy Learners Board – provides a central location for these families to go for assistance.

Families and students enrolled in Minneapolis Public Schools are the NFC's primary clients. Many clients are recent Latino and Somali immigrants. Clients visit the NFC for:

- Health assessments
- Access to health insurance
- Immunizations
- Referrals to medical homes.
- Social stabilization assistance
- Help navigating the medical care system

All NFC services are free, due to a carefully balanced mix of funding. Just as the NFC is a partnership of several agencies, their funding is a patchwork of many grants and City funding. Fortunately, NFC has recently been awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; see page 4 for more information.

The NFC helped 3,176 individuals and 1,070 families during the 2002-03 academic year, a 25 percent increase from the previous year. An equal number of adults and children benefited from NFC services. More than 70 percent of clients are Latino.

Visit the NFC at 2400 Chicago Avenue South, or for more information, contact Gretchen Musicant at 612/673-3955.

Blue Ribbon Panel Reviews Public Health

Co-chaired by Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman and Minneapolis City Council Member Natalie Johnson Lee, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Public Health in Minneapolis met for the first time on September 19th. The 17 Panel members represent the cultural diversity of Minneapolis, the health and human service fields, City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County elected officials, and the Minneapolis Public Schools. (See page 4 for the list of panel members.)

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BLUE RIBBON PANEL continued

As established by the Minneapolis City Council and the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners earlier this vear, the Blue Ribbon Panel is charged with examining the current public health systems for Minneapolis residents and developing recommendations about the structure, accountability, funding, and governance of these systems. The panel will develop recommendations for the Mayor of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis City Council, and the Hennepin County Board by early 2004. For more information, contact Ken Dahl at 612/673-3798.

The Minneapolis Department of health and Family Support (MDHFS) works



to ensure that all families are healthy and fully share in the social and economic opportunities of the City of Minneapolis. The MDHFS reaches residents by working in partnership with community organizations, other units of government, schools, and health and human service agencies.

Ken Dahl, Interim Director

Council Member Natalie Johnson Lee, Chair Health & Human Services Committee

612/673-2301 www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs

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Shoulder to Shoulder: Raising Teens Together

You're the parent of a 14 year old, and while sorting through laundry, you find a pack of cigarettes in his jean pockets. What do you do?
What resource would you call upon for guidance?

This scenario is one of the "parenting dilemmas" outlined by Shoulder to Shoulder, a newly launched campaign to provide information, support and resources for parents of adolescents. Over 70,000 parents of teens across Minneapolis, and Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota, and Scott counties received a 16-page parent resource guide packed with strategies for raising teens and ways parents can have a positive influence in their children's lives. In addition, the campaign launched a website offering news for parents of teens, event listings, links to local and national resources, research reports, parenting tips and bulletin boards where parents can share information about positive parenting techniques. A media campaign has started, featuring ads in community publications, radio public service announcements, and articles in the St. Paul Pioneer Press and community newspapers.

MDHFS has been a major participant in this collaborative, which began in July 2001, and includes public health professionals from Dakota, Ramsey, Scott, and Hennepin counties and the cities of Bloomington, Edina, Richfield, and Minneapolis as well as parent

and Minneapolis, as well as parent education specialists from the University of Minnesota Extension Services.

The Shoulder to Shoulder campaign grew out of a series of focus groups in 2002 with Twin Cities parents of adolescents ages 12-18. The parents indicated that there were few resources they could access that gave them practical solutions to many of the issues they were confronting with their teens. National research also indicates that while a strong network of resources exist for parents of young children, similar resources are not available for parents of teens. For more information, contact Cindy Kallstrom at 612/673-2534 or visit www.shouldertoshoulderminnesota.org.



Children in Minneapolis will have more opportunities to be tested for lead poisoning, with a new grant championed by MDHFS. Megan Ellingson, MDHFS staff, worked with the Sustainable Resources Center to apply for a grant from Park Nicollet Medical Foundation to increase lead testing in the City of Minneapolis. Pictured from left: Michael J. Johnson, President, Park Nicollet Foundation, Megan Ellingson, MDHFS, Carol Bergenstal, Vice-chair of the Park Nicollet Foundation Board, and Steve Frank, Park Nicollet Foundation Grant Committee Chair.

American Indian Community

Pictured are Minneapolis City Council Members, Mayor RT Rybak, and community members who participated in the April 1st signing of an historic document: The American Indian Community Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU includes a workplan and a charge to community and City leaders to produce a State of the American Indian Community Report. Three workgroups, staffed by MDFHS' American Indian Community Advocate, Bill Carter, have been meeting since the MOU was signed. The three workgroups focus on public safety, housing, and civic engagement/regional equity. The report with recommendations will be presented to the Mayor and City Council later this year. For more information, call Bill Carter at 612/673-3028.



Photo by: Travis Lee, Optimistic Consulting Group

Pictured from left to right: Justin Huenemann, co-chair, Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID), Council Members Dean Zimmermann and Natalie Johnson Lee, Joni Buffalohead, MUID, Tony Looking Elk, MUID co-chair, Mayor Rybak, Council Members Don Samuels, Paul Zerby, and Robert Lilligren.

Urban Health Agenda: Emergency Preparedness

If a major disaster struck Minneapolis, how would we communicate with residents who don't speak English? What happens to the senior citizen that is too frail to carry a disaster supply kit? How about the disabled resident whose needs cannot be met at a shelter? Or new immigrants who are fearful of the government, based on their experiences in their home countries?

Recent disasters in major U.S cities have demonstrated that traditional response agencies are often ill equipped to respond to the special needs of vulnerable people. Vulnerable people are those who cannot comfortably or safely access the standard resources offered in disaster preparedness, relief and recovery. As Minnesota's largest

city, Minneapolis is home to a disproportionate share of vulnerable residents. This includes people with physical or mental disabilities, people with medical or chemical dependencies, senior citizens, children, homeless people, and limited English speakers.

Establishing an emergency protocol and plan for delivering services to people with language, cultural, and accessibility needs is a priority for MDHFS. "Making sure our vulnerable residents don't fall through the cracks during a disaster is a major issue we are addressing," explains Pam Blixt, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. "We have a responsibility to communicate with and assist all of our residents during an emergency."

MDHFS staff members are working with other metro public health departments, first responders, and the MN Department of Health on emergency preparedness issues that affect multicultural and vulnerable populations in the Twin Cities. One effort is centered on communication issues, including regular meetings with representatives from the Hispanic, Somali and Southeast Asian communities. Another effort focuses on helping community agencies create and maintain disaster plans. The goal is to ensure these organizations can continue serving vulnerable clients during an emergency.

For more information, call Pam Blixt at 612/673-3933.

Healthy City Updates

Funding Awards

MDHFS' New Families Center program has been awarded a two-year grant of \$115,957 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropy dedicated exclusively to health and health care. Under the grant, MDHFS' researchers and the New Families Center staff will document systemic health care access barriers and issues, especially with enrollment in public health care coverage programs, and develop and pilot strategies to address those issues. For more information, contact Gretchen Musicant at 612/673-3955, and see story on page one.

Minneapolis Public Schools has been awarded a federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant for \$3 million annually for 3 academic years (2003-2006.) MDHFS is a partner in this initiative, which seeks to improve systems that build positive and healthy environments, as well as safety nets, for Minneapolis children. For more information, contact Gretchen Musicant at 612/673-3955.

Staff on the Move

Miriam Ulrich, an Americorps* VISTA worker, joined MDHFS in late August to work on emergency preparedness projects. Miriam is a recent graduate of the University of MN in child psychology, and is fluent in Spanish. She can be reached at 612/673-3794.

School-Based Clinics welcomes **Kate Bots**, RN, a past employee who has now returned to work at the Roosevelt and Broadway clinics, **Dawn DiMartino**, clerk at the Roosevelt and Broadway clinics, and **Dina Payne**, clerk at the South clinic. School Based Clinics operate in 5 Minneapolis Public High Schools, and the Broadway school for pregnant and parenting students. For more information and a brochure on School-Based Clinics, contact Donna Amidon at 612/673-5305.



The 9th annual Latino Family Resource fair was held in Powderhorn Park on Saturday, August 16th. Pictured here is the group Danza Mexicana Cuauhtemoc. La Feria brought together over 80 community organizations and businesses to provide resources to the Latino community in health, social services, education, employment, immigration, citizenship, voting, housing, and government services. This annual event is coordinated by MDHFS' Minneapolis Multicultural Services in partnership with La Oportunidad and Metropolitan Health Plan. La Feria is one of several outreach activities coordinated by Minneapolis Multicultural Services, which has provided language assistance to over 2,000 residents this year accessing services provided by the City of Minneapolis. For more information contact Ellie Zuehlke at 612/673-5438.

FAST FACTS

Blue Ribbon Panel Members:

Natalie Johnson Lee, Co-Chair Minneapolis City Council

Gail Dorfman, Co-Chair Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

Mary Ann Blade Minnesota Visiting Nurses Agency

Doug Davis Senior community interests

Sharon Day American Indian community interests

Ed Ehlinger, MD Director, Boynton Health Services University of Minnesota

Huda Farah Somali community interests

Sharon Henry-Blythe Minneapolis School Board

Kinshasha Kambui Mayor Rybak's office

Jim Koppel Children's Defense Fund

Tony Looking Elk Metro Urban Indian Directors

Jan Malcolm
Former State Commissioner of Health

Chris Reif, MD
Hennepin County Public Health
Advisory Committee

Stella Sola Latino community interests

Marnie Wells Minneapolis Public Health Advisory Committee

John Williams, DDS Minneapolis Dental Society

Cha Lee Hmong community interests